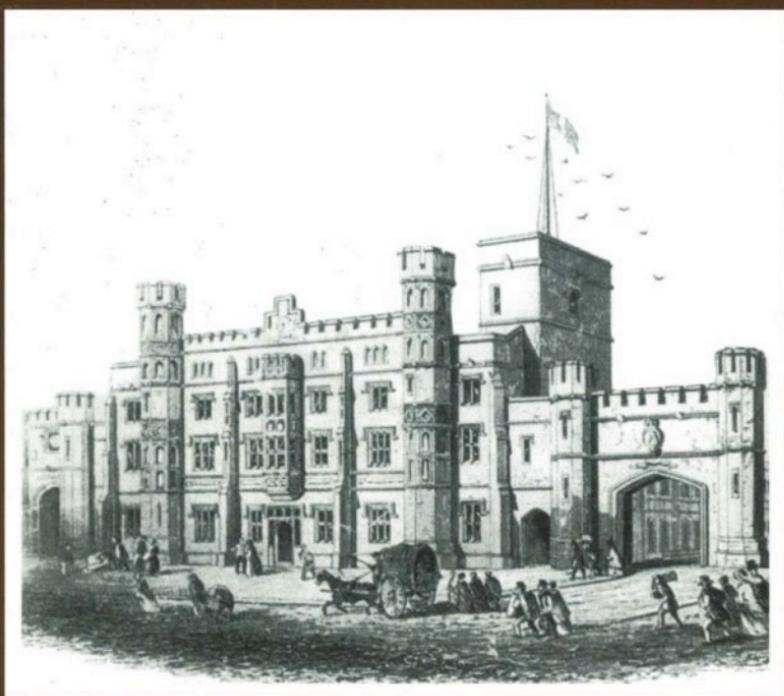


BRISTOL'S MERCHANTS AND THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY



CYRIL GIBSON

THE BRISTOL BRANCH OF THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
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Cover illustration: 'Temple Meads Station' from original lithograph
(Bristol Central Library)

BRISTOL'S MERCHANTS AND THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY

Bristol showed an early interest in steam railways when three prospectuses were issued in 1824 but all the schemes collapsed the following year in a speculation crash when a half of Bristol's banks collapsed.¹ The awe in which the railways were held was well expressed by one of Bristol's early historians, the Rev. Samuel Seyer, in two entries in his *Chronicle of Events 1820-1827*.²

1824: 'There are plans all over the country for the formation of iron railways made of grooves for the passage of wheel carriages. They who warm to the cause considered it probable, yea even certain, that travellers would go at the rate of 10-12 miles an hour day and night without stopping and at less expense than now, and that canals and turnpikes would be superseded. Bristol was also much interested.'

1826: 'The iron railways, as they are strangely denominated, are still going on with wonderful earnestness. I rather doubt their success, although I have a few shares myself.'

Two schemes for a line from Bristol to London in 1832 also failed to materialise but the following year a meeting was convened in the Guildhall with representatives from the Corporation, the Society of Merchant Venturers, the Chamber of Commerce, the Bristol Dock Company and the Bristol & Gloucester Railway to investigate the possibility. The meeting resolved that 'the establishment of a rapid certain and cheap mode of conveyance between this city and the Metropolis will be productive of the most important advantages to the trading and commercial interest of Bristol.' Bristol's merchants were already concerned at the loss of trade to Liverpool and were no doubt even more apprehensive when the Liverpool to Manchester line opened in 1830 and a line was approved three years later from Birmingham to Warrington with further potential advantage to Liverpool. With financial support from London, Bristol's merchants promoted a bill which authorised 'the making of a railway from Bristol to London to be called the Great Western Railway with branches therefrom to the towns of

Bradford-on-Avon and Trowbridge in the County of Wiltshire ... commencing at or near a certain field called Temple Mead within the parish of Temple and joining the London & Birmingham Railway near London'. The scheme was highly ambitious; no precedent existed for a line over 100 miles long anywhere, although two other schemes were in the pipeline. The site for the station was chosen as being the nearest to the city centre with the required amount of open and level land and was sold by the City Council for £12,000. It would appear that the risk of alienating influential landowners and incurring heavy compensation costs deterred any thoughts of a central station. Approval was only given after a lengthy debate by the Council which required the buildings to harmonise with the 'peculiar features of the better specimens of Bristol's architecture generally.'³

The initial promoters were Thomas Guppy, an engineer involved in his family's sugar refinery; William Tothill, a manufacturing chemist who became Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce in 1835, an elected member of the City Council the following year, was a Quaker and had been a Governor of the Incorporation of the Poor; and George Jones and John Hartford, both connected with the Bristol & Gloucestershire Railway which, in fact, was only a small tramline carrying coal into Bristol from South Gloucestershire. At an early stage they were joined by Nicholas Roch, a director of the Dock Company, who was appointed as an Alderman following the first City Council elections in 1836 and who was largely instrumental in pressing the application of Isambard Brunel for the post of Engineer. Following a quick survey Brunel recommended that the route from Reading to Bristol should proceed via Swindon rather than an earlier suggestion of a route via the Vale of Pewsey and the promotion was started to obtain subscriptions and undertake the preparatory work to secure the passing of the Act.

This entailed depositing plans of the proposed route showing details of all landowners and occupants of premises likely to be affected with the Clerks of the Peace for every county involved. Notices had to be published in newspapers and details of the costs of the scheme, together with the responses of affected landowners and occupants, supplied to Parliament before the end of November. Most of this work was undertaken by the two committees of directors, each with twelve members, set up in Bristol and London which constituted the General Board of Management. Although holding different political views the Bristol directors represented a good cross-section of the local mercantile elite and were actively involved in Bristol's public life as Councillors, and as members and officers of the Chamber of Commerce, the Society of Merchant Venturers and the Colston Societies. In addition to the

original promoters the other Bristol directors were:

Robert Bright - Member of a family influential in politics and the West Indian trade, later to become the President of the Free Port Association.

John Cave - Past Mayor and Master of the Society of Merchant Venturers, banker, later replaced by Thomas Pyecroft.

Charles Bowles Fripp - Later to become a Director of the Bristol & Exeter Railway and President of the Anchor Society.

George Gibbs - Western Indian merchant, partner of Robert Bright, active member of the Society of Merchant Venturers, cousin of G.H. Gibbs who helped to raise financial support in London and played a major role in the early days, particularly in support of Brunel against his critics.

William Singer Jacques - President of the Bristol Chamber of Commerce 1832-34, elected as City Councillor in 1836.

James Lean - Councillor, banker, replaced in 1835 by William Tothill who had been the Secretary to the Bristol Committee.

Peter Maze - Active member of the Society of Merchant Venturers, shareholder in the Taff Railway, later Director of the Great Western Cotton Company.

Nicholas Roch - Oil and leather manufacturer, Alderman 1836.

John Vining - Merchant, Vice-Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce 1835-37, Alderman 1836, Mayor 1855-57.

Despite public meetings in major towns it became evident that not enough capital had been raised to satisfy Parliamentary requirements for Private Bills and a less ambitious bill was presented to Parliament for construction of the sections of the line from London to Reading and from Bristol to Bath. Originally, Vauxhall Bridge was chosen as the London terminus in preference to Waterloo or Paddington but this was changed during the hearing of the bill which lasted 57 days and included an eleven-day cross-examination of Brunel. Support for the bill elicited some strange support from traders dissatisfied with the canal service. A Bath draper complained of loss of profit because, by the time his goods arrived in London, fashions had changed and a Bristol wine merchant expressed concern at his losses due to pilfering and adulteration of beer and spirits in transit.⁴

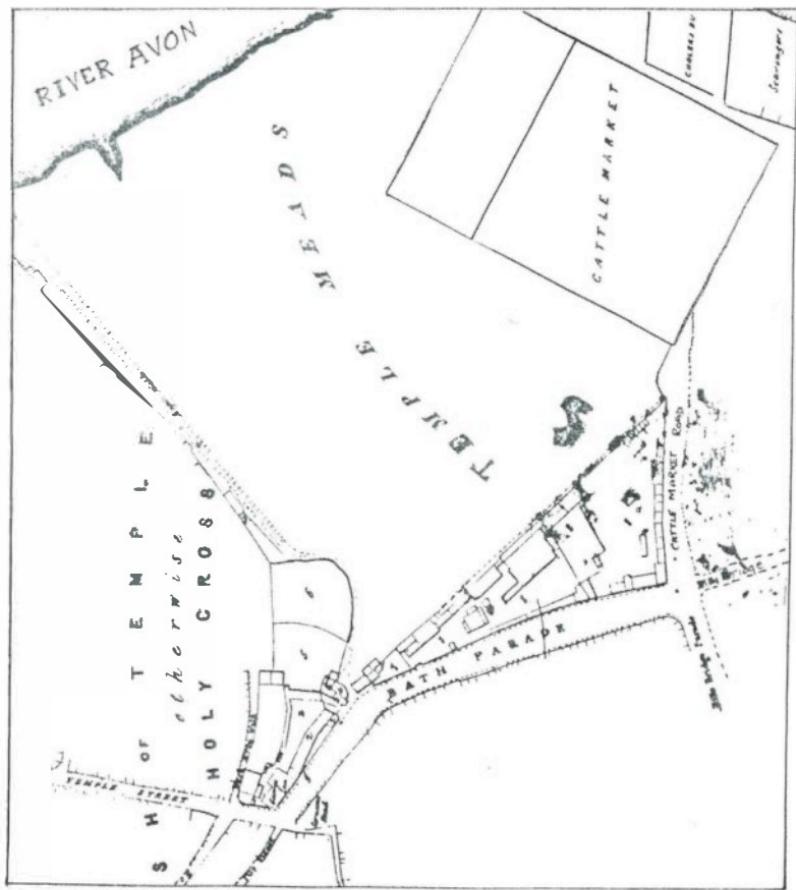
Opposition came from a number of sources including influential landowners, canal owners who feared loss of trade and Eton College whose objection that the proximity of the railway would be harmful to discipline and the boys' morals was overcome by a promise not to build a station within three miles of the school. The most serious objection

came from the London & Southampton Railway which produced plans for a rival line from Basingstoke via Newbury to Bath after the G.W.R. promoters rejected their proposal to join the L. & S. line at Basingstoke which ran to Waterloo. Interestingly, the refusal of the L. & S.W.R. (as it had become) in 1903 to allow that part of their line between Basingstoke and Waterloo to be used by a rival to the G.W.R. was to be a major factor in causing the scheme to be rejected by Parliament. Support in Bath in 1834 proved to be decisive for the G.W.R. and both its independence and monopoly of the line to London survived other challenges, including proposals in 1848 for a merger of the G.W.R., the L. & S.W.R. and the L. & N.W.R. when the railway mania of the mid-1840s was followed by a serious trade depression; agreement, however, could not be reached.

Although the bill was supported by 182-92 votes in the House of Commons it was rejected by the House of Lords by 47-30, mainly on the grounds that the truncated scheme offered no guarantee that the whole line would be completed which they considered essential. In London George Gibbs was constantly concerned at the lack of financial support from Bristol and in 1834 was complaining that there was no chance of support from Bristol or its neighbourhood. Personal canvasses of all the leading people had been quite a failure. Faced with the original setback the promoters issued a supplementary Prospectus to raise more capital and obtained financial support from the Corporation and the Society of Merchant Venturers. Some shares were reserved for landowners on the line, most of whom withdrew their opposition. A petition of support in Bristol secured 10,500 signatures in three days and other steps were taken to overcome perceived objections, such as the change of terminus and the concession to Eton College. The new bill was carried in both houses and received Royal Assent on 31 August, 1835.⁵

Over the next 30 years Bristol's influence diminished. The head office moved to London and constant pressure was extended to secure the appointment of nominees from Liverpool to the Board which was fiercely resisted by George Gibbs who was concerned that the 'Liverpool party' would change the gauge and replace Brunel as the Engineer. Nevertheless, Bristol was losing influence and as the network extended and amalgamations took place new directors were appointed from other parts of the country. In 1849 a clause in the constitution that required eight directors to be resident within 20 miles of Bristol was annulled and in 1878 the last Bristol director, who had served from the 1840s, was replaced. Within 25 years of the first train from Bristol its merchants were expressing concern about the poor service being received and supporting proposals for a rival service to London.

*Plan of site of G.W.R. Station
taken from 1835 deposited plans
(Bristol Record Office)*



**To the Right Honorable the LORDS, Spiritual
and Temporal, of the United Kingdom of
Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament
assembled.**

*The humble PETITION of the undersigned Merchants,
Bankers, Manufacturers, Traders, and Inhabitants of
the CITY of BRISTOL,*

SHEWETH,

That your Petitioners have viewed with the deepest interest the progress of a Bill in your Right Honourable House for making a Railway from Bristol to London, to be called "The Great Western Railway."

That a very large portion of the Inhabitants of this city have invested their Money in that undertaking from a conviction of the Public Benefits that would arise from it, and in the fullest confidence that the very best means have been adopted to secure the completion of that Measure in the manner best calculated to promote their Interests and those of the Public generally.

That your Petitioners are informed and believe that a Rival Company, with whom they have no sort of connexion, have been the principal if not the only Opponents of the Great Western Railway Bill in Parliament, with a view to compel the promoters of that measure to adopt another and an inferior Line in connexion with the Southampton Railway, and for the mere purpose of increasing the value of that speculation.

That your Petitioners most humbly submit that the Southampton Railway Company can have no right whatever to interfere with the efforts of the City of Bristol, which have been repeated during two Sessions of Parliament, from a conviction of their claim to the legislative sanction, and which during two successive Parliaments have actually received the sanction of the Lower House.

That if the Great Western Railway be again defeated, your Petitioners are well satisfied they shall altogether be deprived of the benefits of a Railway, as there are no Funds for the completion of any other undertaking that has been suggested in opposition to it, nor could your Petitioners ever venture to support such undertaking while convinced of the superiority of the one they are advocating, and in which they have Invested Capital to a large extent.

That the benefits of a Railway Communication between Bristol and London will be thus unnecessarily retarded to the manifest prejudice of Bristol, which must be placed in a position of very inferior advantage to Liverpool between which place and London a Railway has already received the Legislative sanction.

That South Wales and Ireland (particularly the Southern part) will also be deprived of the benefits anticipated from a Railway Communication between Bristol and London, to the great prejudice of their Inhabitants, many of whom are Subscribers to a considerable amount.

Your Petitioners therefore earnestly implore your Lordships not to suffer the true Interests of Bristol, and of the Public, to be sacrificed to the efforts of a speculative Company, having no connexion with, or interest in, the City of Bristol, and having, in fact, no other object in view than their own pecuniary Profit.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

The above Petition has for SIGNATURE, at
**The Railroad Office - - - Corn-Street.
The Commercial Rooms - ditto,
AND
At Gutch and Martin's - - Small-Street.**

Gutch and Martin, Printers, Broad-street, Bristol.

Petition in support of G.W.R. (B.R.O.)

Building on the G.W.R. line started simultaneously at both ends and, as with the building of the M4 motorway, initially the two sections did not meet. The first service in 1838 was from London to Maidenhead and two years later was extended to Swindon. In that year, on August 31st, the first train ran from Bristol to Bath with three first-class coaches holding eight passengers in each compartment and five second-class coaches with twelve in a compartment which had low sides and doors and, in addition to being dangerous, exposed the passengers to the elements and to smut and cinders from the engine. The *Bristol Mirror* ‘was surprised at the luxurious ease imparted by the somniferous vehicles (in the first class carriages) and that the wants of every possible description of traveller had been consulted; the sociable, the retired, the valetudinarian and the robust. The second-class carriages afforded accommodation sought in vain on the top of stage coaches.’⁶

In January 1845 a letter to *The Times* was still complaining about the dangerous second-class carriages used by the G.W.R.⁷ and the following month the directors reported that the sides of carriages were being closed with glazed doors and the interiors being ventilated with venetian blinds.⁸ Before the line had opened, in 1839, the Secretary of the Railway was called to give evidence to a Parliamentary Inquiry into the State of Communication by the Railways and was asked what plans the Company had for third class travel. His reply proved to be prophetic: ‘No decision has been taken as yet ... we may well carry the very lowest order of passenger later on ... probably in inferior carriages at very low prices, perhaps at night-time.’⁹

No third class passengers were carried from Bristol until the line to London opened in 1841 when the Box tunnel was completed after five years work. Initially, all passengers who were apprehensive about the tunnel were allowed to dismount at one end and travel to the other end by a horse-drawn coach. Two special trains were introduced for the third-class passengers travelling from Bristol starting at a point outside the station, one at 3.00am and one at 9.30pm, the journeys taking nine hours instead of four. The carriages were uncovered converted goods wagons with low sides, only two feet high, and were notorious for their discomfort. Nevertheless the railway was an instant success; by 1843 all the stage coaches between Bristol and London were withdrawn and in 1858 the coach service to Bath terminated. Following an accident on the G.W.R. line at Sonning in 1842 and a Board of Trade inquiry which reported that the G.W.R. was one of only two companies using goods trains for third class passengers, the sides of the third class carriages were boarded up to a height of 4 feet 6 inches. The Regulations of Railways Act of 1840 created a Railway Department of the Board of

Trade, to which annual reports of traffic and accidents had to be provided and improvements followed another Act introduced by William Gladstone which required companies to provide at least one train a day over all their lines, travelling at a minimum speed of 12 mph and at hours sanctioned by the Board of Trade for a fare of not more than 1d per mile. These trains were known as *Parliamentarians*. In return the companies were excused duty on receipts for the journeys as well as on excursion trains. Third class passengers still had a nine hour journey in ‘horsebox’ carriages with no windows and minimum lighting through a small ventilator in the roof but the cheap morning train now left at 9.30am, although goods trains were still used for passengers on the night service.

The 1840s witnessed the first railway mania. By the end of 1844 3000 miles of lines had been authorised and plans submitted to Parliament for 248 schemes;¹⁰ from 1845 to 1848 another 9000 miles were sanctioned, but only 5000 had been constructed ten years later.¹¹ Many schemes were either withdrawn or failed to meet their commitments and in November 1845 the *Bristol Journal* reported that very serious reverses had been experienced in Bristol and that share gambling was leading to ruin.¹² Most of the front page of the *Journal* was usually occupied with prospectuses for new schemes and the names of members of the provisional committees formed, usually including members of the aristocracy and senior members of the armed forces. Admirals and Lieutenant-Colonels were frequently named. The Bristol Railway Share List quoted 100 companies, including ten in Ireland and twenty foreign companies.¹³ Some of the canals sought to convert to railways, including the Bridgwater & Taunton Canal Company which was given Parliamentary approval in September, 1848. By now the railway traffic returns showed that the G.W.R. was the third largest company with 248 miles of lines; the London & North Western had 428 miles and the Midland, Bristol and Birmingham 397 miles.¹⁴ By now concern was being expressed about mismanagement of the railways and a report showed that, although £148m had been invested, 38% was unproductive and paying no dividends. The report concluded: ‘This may be good for bankers but disastrous for shareholders; public confidence in the railways has had at least some grounds for being shaken’.¹⁵

Two schemes were proposed for a line to Southampton, one a direct line from Bristol¹⁶ and the other a line for carrying coal from ports in South Wales to Weston-super-Mare where wharves would be constructed for the coal to be loaded on good trains travelling via Wells, Wincanton and a junction on the Salisbury & Yeovil Railway at Buckhorn Weston to link up with Southampton and also London and other parts of the line. The proposer claimed that freight charges would be competitive with the

G.W.R. and also with those charged for conveyance by sea.¹⁷ In October 1845 a prospectus was issued for the Bristol & Dover Railway with a capital of £1.5m and a provisional committee of 130 subscribers. The proposed line would run from Bristol to Reigate where it would join the South Eastern Railway and make possible the opening up of new markets for Bristol's merchants.¹⁸ The scheme was supported by the *Bristol Mercury* which claimed 'We fearlessly prognosticate success ... The Government must see its paramount necessity.'¹⁹ Nevertheless, two months later it was unable to comply with the Standing Orders of the House of Commons.²⁰

Brunel's proposal that the G.W.R. line should be extended to Exeter had been rejected by the directors but in 1841 an associate company was formed, the Bristol & Exeter Railway, which leased the first part of its line as far as Bridgwater to the G.W.R. The railway decided to work the line themselves in 1849 when the original lease expired and resisted attempts by the G.W.R. to take them over but in 1876 the two companies merged. Initially, the Exeter line came in at right angles to the main station, requiring passengers to walk over the rail tracks for a connection, but the situation was remedied by the introduction of a loop line. The City Council, which does not appear to have even discussed the critical comments on Bristol in the Report of the Royal Commission on Large Towns and Populous Districts, nevertheless used it to support their objections to proposed alterations at Temple Meads by claiming that, to save a few minutes for passengers, the changes would inflict the evils of impure air which killed thousands annually. 'Ten to fifteen minutes was not too long for parties to get out of carriages and look after their luggage ... The line would cut through five or six streets and would be a nuisance to owners of large properties for a trifling purpose.²¹ Some years later the wooden sheds on the platform at the terminus of the Exeter line led to criticism by the directors of the Bristol and Exeter Railway of 'the cowshed station' and of Temple Meads as 'the most disgraceful, difficult and impracticable station not only in Britain but in the whole of Europe.' The *Bristol Mirror* condemned the site as 'a rambling, ill-arranged and melancholy looking group of stations'. In 1874 a joint station was opened which also included a platform for the Midland Railway line to Gloucester and the north.

In April 1845 a prospectus issued for a Bristol & South Wales Junction Railway was quickly over-subscribed five times. The proposal was for a line to New Passage where a ferry would convey passengers to a station at Portskewett to connect with the South Wales line but the railway was not opened until 1863. Plans to build a bridge over the River Severn at Aust were abandoned as being uneconomic.²² Although

the G.W.R. faced competition from the Midland Railway which thwarted its hopes of constructing a line to the north, when the Severn Tunnel was opened in 1886 it became possible to open a line with a connection from South Wales to Shrewsbury. The tunnel also made possible a passenger service from South Wales via Bristol to Southampton and Portsmouth which opened in 1896.

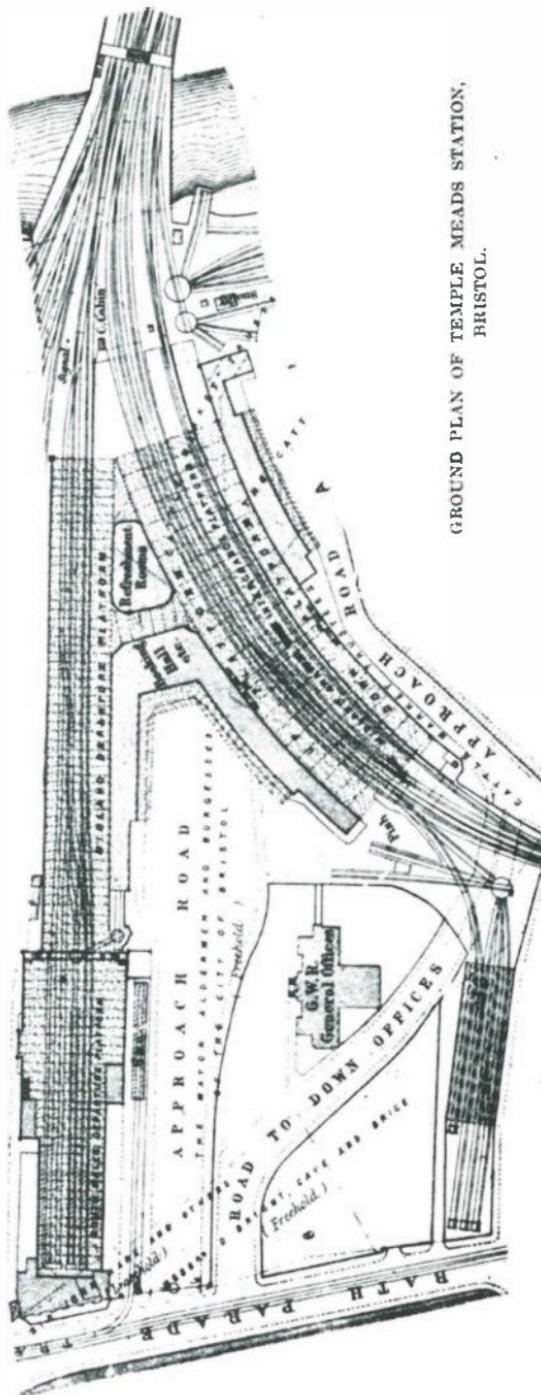
In 1874 the Clifton Extension Railway, a joint venture by the G.W.R. and the Midland Railway, provided a line to Avonmouth from Temple Meads with stations at Stapleton Road, Montpelier, Clifton Down, (Redland in 1897) and linking with the Portway Railway. It then became possible to travel from Clifton Down to Mangotsfield via Fishponds on the Midland line. When the station at Stapleton Road was opened by the Midland Railway in 1867 it had to be inspected to ensure that it conformed to the Board of Trade requirement that it had platforms and other necessary accommodation for the safety of passengers.²³

The Child Nursed and Cradled by Bristol's Merchants

The 'lowest orders' were not the only ones to be aggrieved by the service offered. Although Bristol's merchants had played a leading role in establishing the Great Western Railway the service became a source of widespread criticism which, initially, centred on the lack of a central station and the absence of any connections to the city docks. In the early 1860s the G.W.R. and the Chamber of Commerce supported a proposal for the railway to be extended to a central terminus at Queen Square with a branch line to Clifton terminating at Brandon Hill and a tramway connection to the quays. The Bristol and Clifton Railway Bill aroused opposition from the 'fixed property party'²⁴ and, after the bill failed to obtain the approval of a Parliamentary Select Committee, two other schemes failed, although one had obtained Parliamentary approval but proved too costly to implement.²⁵

However, despite the involvement of Bristol's merchants in founding the G.W.R. disillusionment was already in evidence in 1862 when a Bristol manufacturer, Thomas Gibson, told a Parliamentary Committee that it was possible to send goods to London via Birmingham on the Midland Railway for the same rate charged for their direct route by the G.W.R. whose third-class service was run 'with no regard to the convenience of the public, but rather the reverse.'²⁶

Twenty years later the Annual Report of the Chamber of Commerce for 1882 included a survey which showed that fares from Bristol ranged from 30-63 percent higher than from other comparable towns. Evidence was given to a Parliamentary Select Committee by the President of the Chamber of Commerce, Charles Wills, supported by 260 signatories; a



GROUND PLAN OF TEMPLE MEADS STATION,
BRISTOL.

Ground Plan of Temple Meads Station, approx. 1880

further memorial supported by 45 signatories claimed ‘No place of similar import has so much injured the trade of this city to an alarming extent.’ A third memorial, supported by 657 ‘influential inhabitants’ sent to one of the city’s MPs brought the response from the G.W.R. General Manager, ‘There is no town on the G.W.R. system where business between the company and the public is carried on with such an absence of complaints.’²⁷

In 1882 a prospectus was issued for another alternative service from Bristol to Waterloo, which was promoted by 150 Bristol merchants, traders and manufacturers and supported by the Chamber of Commerce and the Society of Merchant Venturers but opposed by the G.W.R. A bill was deposited in Parliament on December 16th, 1882 with the title *Bristol & London & South Western Junction Railway* and four well-known Bristol merchants were named as directors, John Lysaght, William Hill Budgett, Thomas Davey and Elisha Smith Robinson who attended a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce the following month to present their case. The capital was £1,400,000 and directors had to hold not less than 50 £10 shares. Other prominent subscribers included William Henry Budgett, William Butler, Francis Frederick Fox, Henry Gale Gardner, Charles Nash and George De Lisle Bush who, as Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, was prominent when a further scheme was promoted in 1902.

The bill committed the directors to giving eight weeks notice by placards, handbills or other general notices whenever their plans required the compulsory purchase of 15 houses or more within a parish occupied, wholly or partly, by persons belonging to the labouring classes and also procure alternative accommodation for them. Fares were published, not only for passengers but also for three classes of animals and separate rates were shown for different classes and sizes of merchandise. The charge for passengers was 2d per mile plus an additional 1d for travel in a carriage provided by the company. Respective charges for animals ranged from 1d and ½d to 3d and 1d.²⁸

The sponsors claimed that the scheme would provide a service from Bristol to Kensington, Waterloo Bridge and Cannon Street stations in London and to the whole of the existing London & South Western Railway Company’s system. There would also be a central station in Bristol, which involved covering a part of the Floating Harbour between the Stonebridge and the Drawbridge,²⁹ and another at Old Market Street. A connection would be provided to the quay if the Corporation decided to lay a tramway or railway around the quay. The new company’s proposed line was to be a 40 mile route linking with the existing South Western line between Salisbury and Andover via Westbury to Radstock and then running over

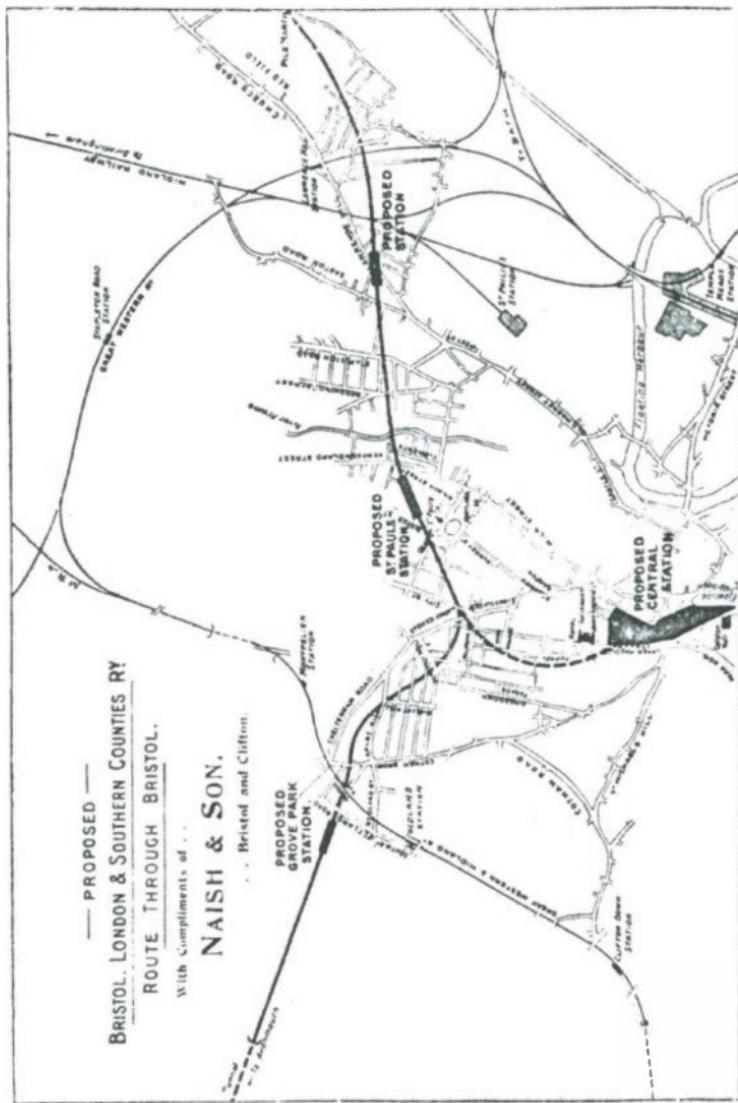
the Bristol & North Somerset line, coming into Bristol at Brislington.³⁰ The original proposals were subsequently amended and, following objections from influential persons in Radstock, the last stage to Bristol was planned to be run from Bath by the Midland Railway Company which then withdrew its original objections.

The proposals required either the G.W.R. or the Bristol & North Somerset Railway to lay, or permit to be laid, down the whole length of the B. & N.S.R. part of the route a double line and 'to make all arrangements of the station, platforms, sidings, rail junctions, turntables and conveniences as necessary to make the existing railway a continuous double line.' The proposals also authorised the Bristol Corporation and the new Company to 'enter into and fulfil contracts for the making of a junction between any tramways of the Corporation laid or to be laid along the Quays abutting on the Floating Harbour.'

Access to Bristol from Brislington was to be over Feeder Road to the junction of Gas Lane and Silverthorne Lane, and then on a route roughly parallel to Midland Road crossing Barton Road, Lowson Street, Albert Street, Horton Street, Willway Street, Unity Street, Jacob Street, Old Market Street, Redcross Street, Narrow Weir, Philadelphia Street, Rosemary Street and Old King Street. The line then continued to the junction of Rupert Street and Bridewell Street with the main line continuing to a passenger station roughly opposite the bottom of Colston Street. The Bristol part of the route was very similar to that proposed for the Bristol Central Railway in 1862. The goods depot, however, was to be located in Lewins Mead at a point about 15 yards (14 metres) northwest from the junction of Host Street and Queen Street and reached by a spur line from near the junction of Rupert Street and Bridewell Street. The proposals involved extinguishing all rights of way in Narrow Lewins Mead, Christmas Street and parts of Jacob Street.

A small number of reservations were expressed about some of the detailed proposals, in particular the length of the line which would be 10 miles longer than the existing route. A letter to the *Western Daily Press* suggested that, because of the growth in population and industry in Kingswood and St. George, it would be preferable to divert the line at Keynsham to run through Hanham, Kingswood and St. George before proceeding to St. Philip's rather than enter Bristol through Brislington.³¹ Another letter objected to the site of the central station which involved covering part of the harbour and proposed that it should be on the Talbot site near Bristol Bridge which would have the advantage of being cheaper as well as being the only point where the tramways 'may be said to meet'. It would also be more accessible to the large population of Bedminster, St. Philip's and Totterdown.³²

Deposited Plan for Bristol London and South Western Railway (B.R.O.)



The shareholders of the Bristol Port Railway and Pier Company were alarmed that unless the G.W.R. successfully opposed the bill and showed that the line was unnecessary, they would have the ‘South West’ on their quays which would enable them to join the Port and Pier Company on the dock at Avonmouth.³³ The bill also caused consternation for the Bristol Meeting of the Society of Friends which led them to take legal advice and petition against it. The proposed line was to be carried on a viaduct 16 feet high across their property at The Friars and impinged on large parts, including the burial ground, carriage drive, yard and school premises. Counsel advised the General Committee that if the scheme was likely to be approved they should press for the company to purchase all the property with the exception of the burial ground and a room to be used for funerals but the Committee was warned that a burial ground carried no special privilege, although any interference which could be avoided would be a strong argument against passing the bill.³⁴

The brief prepared for the Parliamentary hearing stressed a number of points. Their ‘peculiar form of worship’ which involved meditation with no organ or other vocal or instrumental music and no liturgy of any kind meant that noise from the railway would cause a major disturbance to their services. At the moment they were completely isolated from outside interference whereas passing trains would be visible to people attending services. Furthermore, if signals caused the train to stop, worshippers at the graveside attending funerals might hear laughter from passengers who would also be able to see them. The effect on the schools they ran for poor children in the neighbourhood would be disastrous. Although they recognised that the city generally may reap benefits from the entry of another railway they would have to oppose it because the impact for them was so serious.³⁵ The brief in support of the petition contained depositions from several leading members including one from Joseph Storrs Fry, who described himself as a cocoa manufacturer and a Minister. This deposition was annotated, presumably by their solicitor, with the comment, ‘This witness is rather weak on the point of disturbance and should only be called in case of necessity to prove the nature of the meetings and the importance of the schools.’³⁶

The scheme caught the imagination of the Bristol public, in part because it appeared at a time when the country had been experiencing a trade recession and railway fares did not appear to be falling in line with prices generally, which led to the establishment of a Parliamentary Committee to discuss rates and fares. Well-attended meetings were held in most of the wards in Bristol, all of which gave overwhelming support to the proposals, and at a meeting convened by the Mayor in the Guildhall 3000 signatures of support were presented and hundreds of people were unable to gain access.

A crowded meeting of the ‘industrial classes of the city’ at the Colston Hall was chaired by the Mayor who welcomed such an ‘influential deputation of working men’ with their lines of banners around the hall, ‘some glittering with bright new colours and others worn with rust and age’. Lewis Fry, MP, cautiously suggested that although he thought Bristol was well served by the G.W.R. the citizens were entitled to have a second string to their bow. The Master of the Society of Merchant Venturers, Mr. G. De Lisle Bush, was more critical and derided the G.W.R. Chairman for his statement that, ‘The company had done everything for Bristol, its citizens were satisfied with the existing arrangements and the people going into the new line should be pitied’. Officers of the Ancient Order of Shepherds and of the Bristol Trades Council offered their support and contrasted Manchester, where there were three railway companies and where it was possible to buy a week’s ticket to London for 5/-, with Bristol where a day excursion cost 11/-.³⁷

Councillors speaking at the various public meetings were unanimous in their condemnation of the G.W.R. for its disregard of Bristol’s trading interests and for the poor service it offered. Drawing on the last G.W.R. half-yearly report one critic contended that although the Company had been ‘nursed and cradled’ in Bristol, it had subscribed £610,000 to five competing docks and £200,000 developing steamers in five ports.³⁸ Claims were made that the Company deserved little sympathy from the citizens of Bristol and it had by no means treated them properly. The new company would open up large districts of fresh country which would afford scope for the merchants of Bristol.

Opposition emerged at a Special Meeting of the City Council attended by representatives of the new company on February 8th 1883 when Charles Wills, a clothing merchant, launched a major criticism of the scheme which, he contended, was completely unrealistic on many counts. To tell him that this ‘miserable little scheme from Bristol to Radstock’ could compete with the G.W.R. - probably one of the finest lines in England - such a result was impossible. Wills doubted whether they would ever get the capital even if the bill was passed and suggested that some of the scheme’s supporters had made remarks in perfect ignorance of the facts; some of them had never read the bill. After a three hour discussion support for the scheme was carried by twelve votes to five.³⁹ Wills was to play a major part in promoting the next scheme 20 years later.

The *Bristol Mercury* saw some merit in the criticisms and defended Wills against charges of prejudice by referring to his efforts to try to break the G.W.R. monopoly. It reminded its readers that the scheme was not a gift horse and that the promoters were shrewd men of business before being philanthropists. The objections were substantial and the

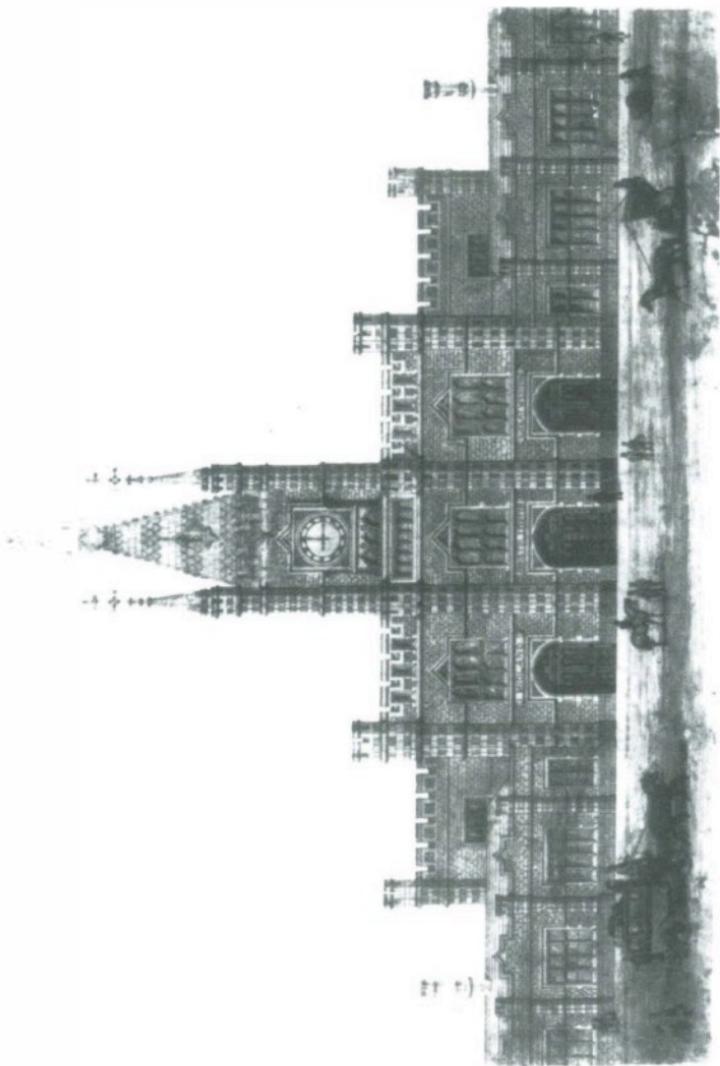
G.W.R. had already announced plans to double the line from Reading to Devizes. Practically, the question was how to force down the G.W.R. tariffs but the alternative route suggested by Wills only existed in his own brain. The proposed scheme was not perfect but ‘a bird in the hand was better than two in the bush.’⁴⁰

The first stages in obtaining the approval of Parliament had been accomplished. The bill had been drafted and approved by the company’s subscribers, the necessary petition seeking leave to introduce the bill had been agreed and the plans, statement of costs, capital, subscribers and officials lodged by the deadline of November 30th. The next stage was progressing the bill through Parliament which involved the bill being checked by the Examiner of Petitions for Private Bills for compliance with Standing Orders, being laid on the table of the House and then progressing to the Second Reading before reference back to a Committee of the House for detailed consideration. In March 1883 a large deputation from Bristol to the Board of Trade was told that opposition expressed by two MPs had been withdrawn but optimism was tempered when new problems arose on the Second Reading of the bill, in particular a ‘cold shoulder’ from the Bristol & North Somerset Railway which led to concessions, in particular as regards the route into Bristol. On April 25th, after only 25 minutes consideration, the Parliamentary Select Committee decided that the preamble had not been proven and the scheme collapsed. The Committee concluded that it was not likely materially to benefit Bristol’s trade, it would probably not be remunerative and the sponsors had not shown such ‘laches’* on the part of the G.W.R. as called for.⁴¹

By 1884 the complaints became more serious when the Chamber of Commerce charged the Company with neglecting the city’s interests and damaging Bristol’s trade to an alarming extent because of its involvement in docks outside Bristol, including Plymouth where it had acquired a financial interest in 1858 and become sole owners in the late 1870s. The position was to worsen as the Company’s interests grew in docks in South Wales. The complaints continued throughout the 1880s but nothing could be done because, following the rejection of the bill for the alternative line, the G.W.R. and the L. & S.W.R. agreed to observe the *status quo* for a period of ten years. However, as in the 1860s competition led the G.W.R. to make improvements to their own service. In 1862 they had introduced a special express train which did the journey to London in 2 hours 40 minutes; in 1875, following successful experiments

* Neglect of legal duty: being remiss.

Original design for front of Joint Station at Temple Meads



by the Midland Railway in adding third-class coaches to all passenger trains and then abolishing second class travel, the G.W.R. added third class carriages to some trains from Bristol and within three years completed the process, including the first morning express, despite the proposal having been derided by Sir Daniel Gooch (Chairman from 1865-1889) not long before. In 1882 they introduced new fast trains with third class coaches and the following year withdrew the excess charges for express trains. The pattern continued when the next, and final, attempt was made to provide an alternative service and a central station.

In 1902 it was claimed that Bristol only had 17 trains a day to London; by contrast, Leeds had 42, Nottingham 41 and Sheffield 33. With the exception of Bristol and Ipswich, all the 25 largest towns had more than one line to London. The City Council was now showing concern and complained that, although the facility was available to other towns, the G.W.R. refused to issue cheap working-class tickets to Bristol and Clifton.⁴² In that year Charles Wills, a former High Sheriff and President of the Chamber of Commerce, Chairman of the Bristol Dock Company, local wholesale clothier and the leading critic of the scheme in 1882, proposed the formation of the *Bristol, London & Southern Counties Railway Company* with a line from Bristol to London via Bath, Trowbridge, and Salisbury Plain to Overton near Basingstoke where it was intended to join the *London & South Western Railway* and proceed via Woking to Waterloo. Bath would have both a passenger and a goods station and consideration was being given to the possibility of the route from Bath to Bristol being electrified. Initially, Wills failed to get support from the businessmen in Devizes who feared loss of trade because the nearest station would have been 2½ miles from the town but the Bristol merchants were satisfied because, by keeping the line north of Andover, the route would be about ten miles shorter than that proposed in 1882 and, therefore, more competitive.

The proposed line from Bath to Bristol would have crossed the River Avon into Crews Hole and Avonvale Road and then run via Tichburn Road, Hayward Road and Morley Street to Barton Hill and St. Philip's near the Midland Station before crossing Lawrence Hill and Easton Road. The route then continued over the River Frome to Wellington Road, Clement Street, Newfoundland Street, Wilson Place, Bishop Street, Brunswick Street, Wilder Street and Backfields. At this point a spur line ran to Avonmouth but the main line continued, crossing City Road, Stokes Croft and Jamaica Street where a 420 yard (384 metre) tunnel took the line behind the Royal Infirmary to Marlborough Hill. The line then continued via Upper Maudlin Street to a double-deck station at Narrow Lewins Mead with four passenger platforms on the upper level

(Colston Street) and goods depots on the lower level (Rupert Street) where there was standing room for 250 goods wagons, but no accommodation for locomotives which were to be kept in sheds at Crews Hole, about 2½ miles away. The upper level also provided standing room for 250 wagons which would be transferred by using hoists. The station would have involved demolition of Christmas Steps and the Unitarian Chapel. There would also have been stations at Lawrence Hill and near St. Paul's Church.⁴³

The proposed spur line cut across Stokes Croft to Thomas Street where a 278 yard (254 metre) tunnel under Ninetree Hill and Springfield Road led to Sydenham Road and Redland Road before crossing the existing G.W.R. line and Zetland Road to a station at Grove Road not far from the Great Western and Midland Joint Station at Redland, opened in 1897. A tunnel, 2477 yards (2265 metres) long, then took the line through Henleaze and Westbury to Avonmouth.

The scheme had the support of the Chamber of Commerce, the Society of Merchant Venturers and many of Bristol's leading businessmen, although it was opposed by W.D. & H.O. Wills and Lysaght's. On December 8, 1902, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce held a special general meeting attended by most of Bristol's influential businessmen who heard a report from Charles Wills and supported the scheme with only one dissenting, Sir William Henry Wills, a director of the G.W.R. who challenged his namesake's claim of support from other railway companies but received no reply. Charles Wills did, however, present some statistics about average journey times from Bristol.

<i>Destination</i>	<i>Distance (miles)</i>	<i>Time (Hrs/Mins)</i>	<i>Avg. Speed (mph)</i>
Southampton	81½	4.15	19
Portsmouth	97½	5.40	18
Bournemouth	78	3.43	21
Brighton	134	7.22	18

Wills claimed that the journey to Brighton could be done in three hours or less and that an hour could be saved on the route to Bournemouth. To illustrate the lack of concern by the G.W.R. for Bristol he compared the time taken from Bristol to Devizes by the G.W.R. with that for the rest of the journey to London on that route. The average return journey from Bristol to Devizes - 65 miles - took 4 hours and 49 minutes as compared with the return from Devizes to London - 172 miles - which took 25 minutes less.⁴⁴

The pattern of the campaign followed that of 1882-83. Enthusiastic meetings were held in all the wards in Bristol, nearly all with unanimous support and only a handful of opposing votes at two meetings. Optimism prevailed and the leading supporters, despite disclaiming unfair criticism,

denounced the G.W.R. for its neglect of Bristol's interests in speeches that could only be described as a combination of fact and fantasy. Great stress was placed on the importance of the new docks at Avonmouth and the need to ensure their success in view of the capital expended. It was widely claimed that Bristol's port charges were lower than London, Liverpool or Southampton and that Bristol would be able to capture trade from Liverpool. G.W.R. freight fares for transporting bananas from Barry to London as compared with the charge imposed from Bristol became a major talking point and at the final rally in the Colston Hall on February 10th, 1903, the Chairman, Alderman C.E.L. Gardner claimed that it took longer to convey imported goods from Avonmouth to Bristol than it had taken to bring them across the Atlantic. The situation was described as 'a Crisis in Bristol's history' and when Charles Wills spoke he was greeted by cries of 'Bristol's Chamberlain'.⁴⁵

In support of their campaign the promoters published a large postcard headed 'Bristol's Awakening' which claimed that the scheme would lead to the creation of new industries and prosperity. The new warehouses would be full and Bristol would become a greater exporting and importing centre. These claims were modest in comparison with other statements made. At a meeting of ratepayers in St. Philip's John Mardon, a printing manufacturer and Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, claimed that if the scheme were approved, within ten years Bristol might have a population of 600,00 people and 'many a man who was now a journeyman might be a master'.⁴⁶ At a meeting in the District ward he claimed that the G.W.R. 'could not have done more damage to itself and to the city of Bristol than it had during the last 25 years'.

The postcard also quoted the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who had reached even dizzier heights, even if displaying some lack of historical knowledge, when he addressed the Chamber of Commerce banquet on March 6th, 1902. The scheme was 'the beginning of something to make the fortunes of Bristol greater in the future than ever in its historic past ... Those men were not faint-hearted who took the ships and flags of Bristol through unknown seas in pursuit of commerce and adventure ... Much would be done to restore the name of Bristol to that proud predominance among the cities of the empire that she held 600 years ago'.⁴⁷

The *Western Daily Press* acknowledged that there were forcible arguments in favour of the scheme, particularly regarding the need for a good railway service from Avonmouth to Bristol, but was cautious about the public euphoria and stressed that the support expressed was confined to the general principles. The details still had to be resolved. Reaction in other quarters was mixed. The scheme was supported by the

**Deposited Plan for
Bristol and London and
South Western Railway
1882/1883**

Key

1. Passenger Station near the bottom of Colston Street
2. Goods Station at Lewins Mead near Christmas Steps
3. Quakers Friars - Friends New Street Meeting House
4. St. Philip's Midland Railway Passenger and Goods Station
5. Temple Meads Passenger Station - Great Western and Midland Joint



Bristol & District Oilmen's and Chandlers' Association, the Queen's Road Association, the Stokes Croft and North Street Ratepayers' Association and the Bedminster West Liberal Ratepayers' Association and also in two letters to the *Western Daily Press* defending the changes to the city centre. One contended that the sooner some of the relics of the past were swept away and replaced with respectable buildings and thoroughfares, the better it would be for the community at large. Another asked, 'What could be more absurd than to allow mere matters of sentiment regarding Christmas Steps to cripple the progress of our city for generations to come ... Bristol must look to the future for her prosperity, not to the past.'

Other letters criticised the proposals. A trader in Grosvenor Road objected to the blocking of Wilder Street which would mean cancelling proposals for improvements in the street and in Grosvenor Road and was not pacified when the promoters offered to build an underpass for local people to cross from one side of the street to the other. A second correspondent criticised the route from Bath to Bristol which crossed the River Avon nine times and could lead to flooding and one supporter of the G.W.R. felt that there were already too many railway and tramway lines in Bristol and too much traffic. Others pointed out that the bill contained nothing about running powers over the *London & South Western Railway* line from Basingstoke to Waterloo which already had traffic problems due to lack of accommodation and suggested that the L.S.W.R. would oppose to the utmost the proposed route from Overton to London. This point was to prove to be a major embarrassment for Wills when he gave evidence to the Parliamentary Committee later.

There was a mixed reaction from local authorities. The problem of flooding caused concern to the Somerset County Council which was also worried about the effect on their roads. Bath City Council saw advantages in the scheme but, initially, was unable to reach agreement with the promoters about proposals for the station at Holloway which involved street widening, although it subsequently withdrew its objections. Devizes District Council was disappointed that the line would not go into the town but also withdrew its initial objections. Warminster Council supported the scheme but acknowledged that in the last six months the G.W.R. had given them one of the best runs probably in the country by means of the new fast trains to Westbury. Bradford-on-Avon expressed concern about possible damage to its waterworks but was forced to withdraw its objection following a crowded meeting of ratepayers. The Parliamentary Bills Committee of the Bristol City Council 'held no brief either for or against the scheme' but insisted on detailed safeguards, in particular regarding routes through the city,

station sites and any works affecting the River Froom. There were, in fact, 56 public road, river and rail crossings in Bristol but when the City Council obtained the necessary assurances from the promoters it withdrew its objections. Support was received from a number of towns and District Councils which saw advantages to the scheme, including Bournemouth, Guildford, Poole, Basingstoke, Trowbridge, Radstock, Midsomer Norton, Warmley and Kingswood.

The G.W.R. attacked the proposals in a memorial to Parliament complaining of non-compliance with Standing Orders and making sweeping allegations against the promoters. Notices of the bill were defective and misleading and did not state sufficiently where plans, sections and books of reference would be deposited. Information about some of the lands affected was inaccurate and there were wrongful entries in the books of reference.⁴⁸ The effect was to delay consideration by the Parliamentary Standing Orders Committee to enable the promoters to meet the charges but the Examiner only upheld one of the complaints made by the G.W.R. and the bill was referred to the Standing Orders Committee on January 27th, 1903. The Committee accepted that the technical irregularity would be adjusted and agreed to consider the bill on its merits.

By the time of the Second Reading of the bill a 'monster petition' weighing about 80 pounds (about 36 kilograms)⁴⁹ had been submitted containing 50,000 signatures, including 3000 from residents outside the city boundary. To obtain the signatures the city was divided into districts and a mass canvass undertaken. At this stage it was reported that there were 32 petitions against the scheme but many were withdrawn at the subsequent hearing by the Select Committee where the barrister presenting the case stressed the importance of the scheme in enabling the large expenditure by Bristol on shipping facilities at the docks to be justified. He also referred to the loss of trade being experienced because the G.W.R. was diverting South Wales traffic direct to London. Witnesses stressed that unlike the G.W.R., which had financial interests in rival ports, the proposed new line would only serve Bristol.

Charles Wills then elaborated on other points and was cross-examined at length by spokesmen on behalf of the G.W.R. and the L.S.W.R. Wills claimed that Bristol merchants had long complained about the lack of G.W.R. rolling stock, even for existing trade, and that it was hoped that trade at the new dock would be doubled. Including London, the proposed scheme would give access to more than a quarter of the country's population. He also claimed that the G.W.R. charged as much for conveyance of goods between London and Bristol as for conveyance between London and Exeter. For good measure he added that if there should be a war Bristol was a safer port than London.

The cross-examination of the promoters can only be described as disastrous. Wills, in particular, was quite unprepared and admitted that he could not remember some of the details about the original proposals and could give no answers to some of the important questions. He acknowledged that he had never asked Parliament for running powers to London nor had any agreement with the London & South Western Counties Railway to use their line from Basingstoke to Waterloo. He had no statistics to show the financial prospects of the scheme nor how much the company would have to earn per mile to be able to pay a dividend. The promoters had not gone so far as to consider the question of raising capital nor asked the City Council if they would give financial support. They were 'relying on the population'.

Other witnesses were equally vague with their answers. Sir Herbert Ashman was asked what sort of temptation they could offer to prospectors investors and acknowledged that he had no idea how many passengers or tons of goods would have to be carried to make the proposal viable. Neither could he answer when he was asked what response had been received to a request made by the promoters to supporters to offer specific promises of financial support in order to impress the Parliamentary Committee. It transpired later that 100 replies had been received in response to 400 letters sent and that 80 people had made firm promises of £278,000. The City Council subsequently agreed to subscribe £100,000. Ashman was forced to admit that all he knew was that 'the citizens of Bristol believe that two railways are better than one.'

The promoters were challenged regarding their original intentions which, it was claimed, implied a promise of a line to Waterloo, as did the title of the bill, but this was refuted; the scheme was only for a line to Overton. Nevertheless, in the course of a lengthy cross-examination, the Engineer for the scheme acknowledged that its first objective was to provide an alternative route to London and gain access to the South and South Eastern counties. The London & South Western Railway spokesman stressed that there had never been the possibility that they would have supported any scheme proposing running powers over their lines. Secondary objectives claimed were improved facilities at Avonmouth Docks and direct access to the War Office site on Salisbury Plain with connections to the principal military depots in the South of England, in particular with Aldershot.

The Committee gave considerable attention to possible engineering problems and, although acknowledging that the design of the station was not ideal, the Engineer claimed that the technical problems arising from having two levels were not insurmountable and that in view of the price of land in central Bristol there was even an economic advantage in

having two levels. He also defended the proposed route from Avonmouth to the central station via the station in St. Paul's although it involved replacing the engine from one end of the train to the another and suggested that if there were problems for goods trains another goods station could be found. He did, however, acknowledge that the proposed line would involve demolition of a 'good many' houses let at rentals of between 4/- and 7/- p.w. The Committee then considered evidence about traffic prospects and the promoters claimed that fares could be considerable lower than those charged by the G.W.R. The fare to Basingstoke would only be two-thirds of the G.W.R. fare and the journey could take 1½ hours less.

On the thirteenth day of the hearing, May 27th, the Chairman expressed concern at the lack of tangible evidence regarding the financial prospects and warned that Parliament was opposed to granting concessions unless it was satisfied that the promoters were likely to be in a position to construct the line. In many respects they were considering a Bristol relief bill. By now 60 witnesses had been heard and the Committee adjourned until after the Whitsun holidays, giving the promoters time to produce some convincing evidence. Little was forthcoming and the procedures were abruptly terminated when the Chairman, after acknowledging that on several material points a fair *prima facie* case had been made, rejected the application.⁵⁰

Parliament had not been convinced that Bristol could raise the necessary finance and gave judgment with the caustic comment: 'We have heard with some reiteration from Bristol witnesses that this is to be a Bristol line, constructed by Bristol men, managed by Bristol men, on Bristol methods and in the interests of Bristol. It is noticeable, however, that the alleged enthusiasm of Bristol over the project has not been crystallised into cash support.'⁵¹ Bristol had lost its last chance of acquiring a central station, although the *Western Daily Press* took an optimistic view and suggested that the volume of evidence produced should convince the G.W.R. of the immense possibilities of developing the docks. It also suggested that future schemes should find a more suitable central site to avoid the technical problems arising from the movement of goods in a double-deck station and that it might be possible to find a satisfactory line either to Victoria Station, the Great Central Station or a site for a station in Chelsea. In 1907 the Chamber of Commerce was still complaining of poor service which it attributed to the role of the G.W.R. as dock owners of other ports and, by 1921, docks in South Wales controlled by the G.W.R. made it the largest private dock undertaking in the world.⁵²

Notes

Abbreviations:

FFBJ - *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*

BM - *Bristol Mercury*

WDP - *Western Daily Press*

BRO - Bristol Record Office

1. J. Latimer, *Annals of Bristol*, Vol.3, pp.111-113.
2. Rev. S. Seyer, *Chronicle of Events 1820-1827*, A/No. 4529 (Bristol Reference Library).
3. A. Vaughan, *Grub, Water and Relief*, pp.71-72.
4. *Great Western Magazine*, Centenary Number, 1935, p.441.
5. For detailed information see G. Channon, *Bristol and the Promotion of the Great Western Railway*, 1985 (Pamphlet No. 62 - Bristol Branch of the Historical Association). See also *GWR Magazine*, Centenary Number, 1935.
6. *Bristol Mirror*, 5/9/40.
7. BM, 18/1/45.
8. FFBJ, 15/2/45.
9. Select Committee to Inquire into the State of Communication of the Railways (1838-1840).
10. H. Parris, *Government and Railways in 19th Century Britain*, pp.71-72: 87.
11. The G.W.R. had 259 route miles of lines in 1851 and 2627 by 1900, approx. 12 percent of the total.
12. FFBJ, 29/11/45.
13. FFBJ, 31/5/45.
14. FFBJ, 22/1/48.
15. FFBJ, 14/9/48.
16. R.G. Bassett, *Southampton and Bristol united by a direct railway communication*, Gladstone Collection, University of Bristol Library. (There is some doubt about the authorship but it is believed to be R.G. Bassett who was the Hon. Sec. of the Southampton Chamber of Commerce).
17. J. Fowler, *A South Wales and Southampton Railway for connecting the Bristol Channel with the South Coast*, Restricted pamphlet HE 3019 in the Gladstone Collection, University of Bristol Library.
18. FFBJ, 4/10/45.
19. BM, 11/10/45.
20. FFBJ, 27/12/45.
21. FFBJ, 1/3/45.
22. FFBJ, 31/5/45 & 14/6/45.
23. Parris, p.185.
24. Latimer, *Annals*, Vol.3, p.388 (Term used to describe property owners in the city whose buildings may have had to be demolished). G. Channon suggests that land-owning members of the City Council objected to the proposal to locate the central station in Queen Square.

25. See Historical Association pamphlet (No. 66) by Peter Harris, *Bristol's Railway Mania*, 1862-1864.
26. Canon R.B. Fellowes, 'Rival Routes to Bristol' in *Railway World*, November, 1960, p.329.
27. Annual Report of the Bristol Chamber of Commerce (1882), pp.89-93.
28. Bristol & Frenchay Society of Friends Papers, Bristol Record Office, SF/D4/13.
29. One speaker at the meeting in the Guildhall claimed that the loss of part of the Floating Harbour was of little consequence as it was only used by 280 small ships a year.
30. Deposited Parliamentary Plans (Bristol Record Office). Some of the roads and streets no longer exist, having been either destroyed in the air raids or in slum clearance schemes.
31. WDP, 25/11/82.
32. BM, 30/1/83.
33. WDP, 15/12/82.
34. Society of Friends, BRO/SF/D4/1.
35. Ibid, SF/D4/12.
36. Ibid. SF/D4/12.
37. BM, 13/2/83.
38. BM, 2/2/83.
39. Bristol City Council, 8/2/83.
40. BM, 9/2/83.
41. BM, 25/4/83.
42. Bristol City Council, 8/7/02.
43. Deposited Parliamentary Plans (Bristol Record Office).
44. WDP, 9/12/02.
45. WDP, 11/2/03 (Joseph Chamberlain, who was Colonial Secretary and was largely responsible for British policy at the end of Boer War, was visiting South Africa at that time and was constantly in the news).
46. WDP, 15/1/03.
47. WDP, 19/1/03.
48. WDP, 15/1/03.
49. Assessed weight: an interim petition had been submitted containing about 33,000 signatures which weighed 48 pounds.
50. The *Western Daily Press* gave full reports of the proceedings before the Parliamentary Select Committee from March 13th until June 11th, 1903.
51. Fellowes, *Rival Routes*, p.361.
52. *GWR Magazine*, Centenary Number.

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